

Congresswoman Betty McCollum
Caucus on Congressional – World Bank Dialogue
Launch with World Bank President Robert Zoellick

July 16, 2008

Good afternoon.

It's my pleasure to welcome you to the official launch of the Caucus on Congressional-World Bank Dialogue.

I am very pleased to be joined today by my colleague and caucus co-chair, Representative Kevin Brady of Texas.

We are all honored World Bank President Robert Zoellick is standing with us at the start of this effort. I have the utmost respect for President Zoellick.

He is an experienced, respected leader who inherited a tough job at a very difficult moment for the Bank, and for the global system. I'm proud to see that he is taking the toughest global issues head-on and offering a compelling vision for the future of the World Bank.

We are joined by several other distinguished guests.

We would like to recognize my former House colleague Jim Kolbe. Congressman Kolbe continues to be a champion for development issues as a Senior Fellow at the German Marshall Fund.

We also extend a special welcome to Mr. Whitney Debevoise, the U.S. Executive Director of the World Bank.

We are grateful these leaders are with us today to recognize the importance of the relationship between the U.S and the World Bank, and specifically the importance of engagement between Members of Congress and the Bank.

This relationship dates back to 1944 when the World Bank was established to help rebuild a devastated Europe at the end of World War Two.

The Congress has helped to sustain this partnership in the decades that followed with generous and regular appropriations to the Bank's International Development Agency, known as IDA, and through the policy leadership of the Executive Branch.

In fact, this year marks the 15th replenishment of IDA and we're working for another substantial commitment from the United States.

Over the past 60 years, the Bank's mission has evolved to include the fight against poverty and

the pursuit of a shared global prosperity.

This Caucus comes into being at a moment when Congress and the World Bank are both confronting new global challenges, including climate change, rising food prices, and energy security.

These challenges are placing new demands on us all and require a renewed commitment to global collaboration.

And, it will be up to the next President and Congress to re-evaluate our nation's role in the world and how we will re-shape our foreign policy in the 21st Century.

One of the essential questions in this discussion will be how the United States should work with multilateral institutions like the World Bank to achieve common goals through cooperative action.

What the World Bank should expect from Congress is a forum for dialogue and discussion – sometimes yielding disagreement and other times achieving consensus.

Our Executive Branch is calling upon Congress to invest in the World Bank – over \$1 billion a year. As an investor, we must ask questions and should share our views with the leadership of the Bank.

This caucus provides Congress with the opportunity to share ideas, listen to experts, and learn about the important role the Bank plays in confronting the problems faced by billions of the world's poorest people.

Through dialogue, the Congress can gain better access to the Bank's tremendous resources on issues of international development;

Through dialogue, issues of concern and disagreement can be respectfully raised and properly addressed;

And through dialogue, we will improve coordination to get better results – that means more lives saved; fewer hungry children; better access to clean water, jobs, and a future for millions of people in the developing world.

I'm pleased to say this caucus will be strongly bipartisan due to the commitment of my colleague and Caucus Co-Chair -- Congressman Kevin Brady from the 8th Congressional District of Texas and a member of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Thank you, Congressman Brady.